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THEY SAID IT

And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.

John Milton, *Areopagitica*, November 23, 1644.

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FEAR AND LOATHING IN WASHINGTON.

Conventional wisdom has it that the left-wing hand-wringing over the Tea-Party movement and other assorted protests against the Obama administration is purely political. Former drama critics like *The New York Times'* columnist Frank Rich screech endlessly about racism and the new climate of fear, while drama queens like Bill Clinton bloviate breathlessly about the risk of violence and the incivility of political discussion and the protestors' indubitable terrorist sympathies.

And everyone knows that they're all full of . . . well . . . it. No one thinks these people are serious. No one believes that they're really afraid for their lives or their country. No one actually considers that this is about anything other than discrediting the opposition, by whatever means necessary. As the inimitable Mark Steyn put it over the weekend:

I suppose the thinking runs something like this. All things considered, the polls on Obamacare aren't totally disastrous, and the president's approval numbers seem to have bottomed out in the low forties, and when you look at what that means in terms of the electoral map this November, you've only got to scare a relatively small percentage of squishy, suburban moderate centrists back into the Democratic fold, and how difficult can that be?

Hence, Bill Clinton energetically on the stump, summoning all his elder statesman's dignity (please, no giggling) in the cause of comparing tea partiers to Timothy McVeigh. Oh, c'mon, they've got everything in common. They both want to reduce the size of government, the late Mr. McVeigh through the use of fertilizer bombs, the tea partiers through control of federal spending, but these are mere nuanced differences of means, not ends. Also, both "Tim" and

“Tea” are three-letter words beginning with “T”: Picture him upon your knee, just Tea for Tim and Tim for Tea, you’re for him and he’s for thee, completely interchangeable. To lend the point more gravitas, President Clinton packed his reading glasses and affected his scholarly look, with the spectacles pushed down toward the end of his nose, as if he’s trying to determine whether that’s his 10 a.m. intern shuffling toward him across the broadloom or a rabid armadillo Al Gore brought along for the Earth Day photo op.

So it’s all a ruse. What else is new?

Well, what if this is what’s new? What if “everyone” is wrong? What if the conventional wisdom is misguided, as it so often is? What if Bill Clinton and Frank Rich; Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid; John Lewis and Emanuel Cleaver; MSNBC and CNN; what if all of the tea-parties-equal-violence-and-terrorism sorts aren’t just playing politics and trying the delegitimize conservatives? What if they really are scared?

It sounds ridiculous, we know. But maybe . . . just maybe . . . there’s something to it.

We’d argue that this is, in truth, not such a ridiculous idea. After all, the people who claim to be so terribly frightened of the Tea partiers are generally of the same mind, same ideological perspective, and same beliefs as are the folks at Comedy Central and Viacom, who last week decided to edit the comedy network’s flagship program, *South Park*, so as not to offend any Muslims.

On the off chance you haven’t heard, two weeks ago, *South Park* creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone committed a sacrilege . . . sort of. They kinda showed Mohammed, the Islamic prophet, in a bear suit. And when this semi-sacrilege caused a stink on a “Muslim” web site, the powers that be at Comedy Central quickly put on clean skivvies and censored the next episode of the show (which aired last week), even going so far as

to edit an entire speech about how important it is not to be cowed into gratuitous censorship. Or, again to borrow from Mark Steyn:

So the brave, transgressive comedy network was intimidated into caving in and censoring a speech about not being intimidated into caving in. That’s what I call “hip,” “edgy,” “cutting-edge” comedy: They’re so edgy they’re curled up in the fetal position, whimpering at the guy with the cutting edge, “Please. Behead me last. And don’t use the rusty scimitar where you have to saw away for 20 minutes to find the spinal column . . .

Aha, you say! That’s nothing like fearing the Tea Partiers! Muslim terrorists have actually carried out acts of terrorism and vengeance, and have done so against those with the lack of sense to show irreverent images of Mohammed. Bill Clinton’s purported thugs, by contrast, have never been anything but peaceful.

Well, fine, we guess. Except for this little fact: According to Fox News, among others, the nasty, dangerous, horribly frightening Islamic terrorist who scared the bejeezus out of Comedy Central was not Osama bin Laden; it was not Ayman al-Zawahiri; heck, it wasn’t even Nidal Hasan, the nutcase who shot up Ft. Hood. It was, rather, a goofy kid trying a little too hard to anger his parents. To wit:

By all appearances, Zachary Adam Chesser was the boy next door. He played football and was on the crew team at one of the best high schools in the country. He even studied Japanese. He was hardly the sort of boy you’d expect would suggest on a radical Islamic website that the creators of the edgy cartoon series “South Park” will be targeted for death.

But Chesser also had a dark side. He was a “loner,” a former classmate said, one who frequently drew pictures of Satanic

figures in his notebooks and had just a few friends, most of them male.

“He was definitely sort of weird,” the classmate told FoxNews.com. “He was very into violent industrial music, borderline Satanic bands and stuff like that. He had dark undertones in his interests.”

Two years later, Chesser is literally a changed man. He now uses an alias and has a new set of hobbies. He now likes to be called Abu Talhah Al-Amrikee, and his primary interest in this world appears to be Islamic radicalism.

This doesn't mean that Abu Zach is not a real threat. He may well be. But in all likelihood, he's just some annoying kid. And still, he managed to force the erstwhile greatest defenders of free speech and political/social satire to run screaming from room, shrieking all the way.

Given this, and given the apparent alacrity with which this country's social and political elites will surrender fundamental freedoms out of pure, unmitigated and unapologetic fear, is it really that much of a stretch to presume that the Tea Party hyperventilators would sacrifice free speech for protection against these “angry mobs.” Is it really that unreasonable to believe that Bill and Frank and the rest of them really are scared to death and really do want the First Amendment curtailed just so that they can let their guard down a little and not have to clutch their handbags in panic every time they see a middle-aged white guy or a doddering old grandma with a sign that says “Don't tread on me!”

Well . . . yeah. It is a bit of a stretch too far. Bill Clinton isn't any more scared of the Tea Partiers than he's scared of ol' Ken Starr. To him – as well as the rest of the left's shriekers – the “fear” meme is political garbage, pure and simple. You know it. They know it. Everyone knows it.

But then, maybe not “everyone” knows it. To an outsider – someone like, say, Hugo Chavez or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; Bashar Assad or the aforementioned Ayman al-Zawahiri; Kim Jong Il or Hassan Nasrallah – it might be hard to pick up the subtle distinctions between actual fear and feigned fear as they watch America's ruling elite cower at even the most modest disturbances of public order.

Nearly seventy years ago, CS Lewis penned *The Abolition of Man* as his response to the intellectual and philosophical attacks on natural law and on objective morality. Lewis forecast a dystopian future dominated by those whom he called “men without chests,” men who are over-intellectualized, devoid of character, lacking in courage and other traditional virtues, men who “laugh at virtue.” “Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary,” Lewis wrote, “it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.”

To any objective observer, or even, for that matter to the specific type of subjective observers who dominate the “rogue nations” of the earth, there can be little doubt that the men in charge of the United States and its Western brethren – be they at the White House, Viacom, Comedy Central, *The New York Times*, Number 10 Downing Street, or anywhere else at which “elite” Western opinion gathers – are the very personification of Lewis's metaphor.

Books are cancelled for fear of reprisal. Cartoons are not reprinted for fear of reprisal. Allies are abandoned for fear of reprisal. Heck, just last week, Kurt Westergaard, the Danish cartoonist and artist behind the original Mohammed-bomb-head doodle that set the “men” of the West into apoplexy four years ago, was involuntarily “retired” by his newspaper for – sing it with us, now! – fear of reprisal.

There is nothing, it seems, that the leaders of the West won't do in order to placate those whom they fear. Sure, they couch their capitulation in terms of religious and cultural sensitivity, but that's about as lame an excuse as there is. As, Ross Douthat, the *New York Times'* token conservative put it:

In a country where the latest hit movie, “Kick-Ass,” features an 11-year-old girl spitting obscenities and gutting bad guys while dressed in pedophile-bait outfits, there isn’t much room for real transgression. Our culture has few taboos that can’t be violated, and our establishment has largely given up on setting standards in the first place.

Except where Islam is concerned. There, the standards are established under threat of violence, and accepted out of a mix of self-preservation and self-loathing.

What’s the upshot of all of this? Well, at the local level, there will be more intimidation. If threats issued by 20-year-old Goths-cum-Islamists can be so successful, why not try something a little more serious, with a little better backing, and on a little grander scale? If the TV network that allowed *South Park*’s creators to equate Scientology with the sexual molestation of children can be made by a no-name crackpot to make stinky in their drawers and censor their erstwhile uncensorable superstars, then what can somebody with actual, legitimate Islamist credentials do? What *can’t* they do?

On a little broader scale, if the President of the United States is willing to stand around with his thumb in uncomfortable places that are devoid of sunlight while Iran puts the finishing touches on its bomb; while Syria supplies Hezbollah with Scud Missiles that can reach any target in Israel; while the North Koreans torpedo South Korean ships; while Hugo Chavez cements arms-trading relationship with Russia and imports even more Iranian soldiers (in contravention of the nearly-200-year-old Monroe Doctrine), then what do America’s enemies have to do even to draw a rebuke? Or, to repeat: what *can’t* they do?

As we and countless others have noted, in the age of Obama, there is no benefit to be gained from being an American ally and no price to be paid for being

an American enemy. Truth be told, the enemies are treated far more deferentially, as either the Brits or the Israelis can attest.

Part of this, as we have argued, is likely derived from the fact that Obama does not believe that the values that bind the United States to such allies as Britain and Israel are values worth protecting, but are, rather, the values of Western oppression. But another part of it is quite probably less academic, more practical, and based entirely on fear. On the one hand, we don’t need to be nice to the Brits. What’re they gonna do? Angrily return the Ipod the President gave the Queen? On the other hand, we better darn well be nice to Mad Mahmoud, lest he kill (more) American soldiers in Iraq, stir up (more) trouble in Afghanistan, set the Straits of Hormuz ablaze, or send terrorists our way. Gordon Brown’s problem, you see, is that he’s just not scary enough to get anywhere with the current administration.

If Brown wants to get the folks in Washington to pay attention to him, he has two options. He could threaten to arm terrorists with nuclear weapons to be detonated outside the Pentagon. Or he could do far worse and promise to cut taxes, shrink the size of government, and roll back the National Health Service.

Whichever way he goes, we’re sure Frank Rich, Bill Clinton, and presidential spokesman Robert Gibbs will faint from fear.

To quote the incomparable Mr. Kurtz, “The horror! The horror!”

IMMIGRATION. AGAIN.

We hate to say we told you so, but...

OK. Fine. You’ve got us. We actually like saying “we told you so.” We relish it. It’s an essential part of our shtick.

What we hate is stuff about which we told you so. In this particular instance, what we have in mind is the following, which we told you about eight weeks ago:

It took some time, of course, but even George W. Bush, the compassionate conservative who spoke Spanish and whose brother married a Mexican immigrant, eventually threw in the towel. Everyone, it seemed, including the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, got the picture that comprehensive immigration reform, particularly if it included a “path to citizenship,” was political poison.

Everyone, that is, except Barack Obama . . .

If the White House were a prison and we were the warden, we’d be taking away the President’s belt and shoestrings right about now. Seriously. This – on top of the cap’n trade fiasco, the stimulus disaster, the health care debacle, and the looming attempt to push health care reform through Congress against the public’s will and through the manipulation of parliamentary principles – is really all the evidence we would need to put this goofball on a suicide watch . . .

Like every major issue, immigration reform is about politics at least as much as it is about policy. And politically speaking, tackling comprehensive immigration reform now is a really dumb idea, so dumb that words do not exist to describe its dumbness. It’s almost as if Obama is sitting around, reading our critiques of some of his other recent failures and muttering to himself: “They think my health care plans are dumb, huh? Well, they ain’t seen nothing yet. If those two pajama-clad reactionaries want to see dumb, I’ll show ‘em dumb.”

Et voila, we guess . . .

Friday morning, we woke up to read the following from *Reuters*:

President Barack Obama on Friday warned that without federal immigration reform the door would be open to “misguided efforts” such as a new Arizona law that has raised questions of civil rights.

Obama pressed for immigration reform at a White House Rose Garden ceremony in which 24 members of the U.S. military originally from China, Mexico, Ethiopia and other countries became American citizens . . .

The *Reuters* lead noted as well that “Democrats may push immigration reform effort in Congress.”

We have been reluctant up to this point to predict that the Republicans would retake any part of Congress this November, largely because we have little faith in the Republicans in question. The Democrats’ biggest advantage is and will remain their opponents.

That said, if *Reuters* is right and if the Democrats join Obama in this suicide mission and “push immigration reform,” then all bets are off. If the Democrats push immigration reform and if they “rush” it through in order for it to be done before the election, which is to say before the August recess, then they will regret it – though a great many of them will not live politically to do so. The political gurus around the country will have to put their minds together to come up with a new term, given that “landslide” will simply not do justice to political slaughter.

Of course, in fairness, we should note that Obama’s current enthusiasm for the issue is driven in part by the passage of an Arizona law last week, the aim of which is to enable the state to secure its borders and to end the violence spilling over from south of those borders (about which “we told you” most recently

two weeks ago). Obama thinks the law is abusive and unfair and will result ultimately in racial profiling. Therefore, he feels compelled to act and to act now.

The problem with this is that the overwhelming majority of the people of Arizona think that the President is a royal pain-in-the-tuchus and that he should mind his own business. As Scott Rasmussen's polling company reported last week:

A new Rasmussen Reports telephone survey finds that 70% of likely voters in Arizona approve of the legislation, while just 23% oppose it . . .

Arizonans consistently have been critical of the U.S. government's failure to secure the border with Mexico, and that anxiety has increased with growing drug violence along the border.

While many in Washington, D.C. view immigration reform as a way to legalize the 10 million or more illegal immigrants in the country, 73% of voters in Arizona now say gaining control of the border is more important than legalizing the status of these undocumented workers . . .

Eighty-four percent (84%) of Arizona Republicans and 69% of voters not affiliated with either major party in the state favor the new get-tough legislation. Democrats are more closely divided: 51% like the new law, but 43% oppose it.

On the off chance that our friends in the White House are having trouble figuring out which numbers matter, we'll repeat: 69% of independents and 51% of their fellow Democrats agree with the law. Moreover, 3/4^{ths} of the state's residents believe that this law is necessary because the federal government has abdicated its role to secure the borders.

And Obama wants a comprehensive immigration bill.

As we noted eight weeks ago, we sympathize with the guy and, for that matter, with the immigrants who are here illegally. But we're not in charge, and if we were, we wouldn't be so stupid as to attack a border enforcement law without offering an alternative. And we wouldn't be so stupid as to propose legislation that would, essentially, grant amnesty to the 10-30 million illegals already here without getting the border issues straightened out first. That's just nuts.

It's also nuts that the President would appear so gung ho about addressing immigration and attacking the Arizona immigration bill despite the fact that he has never even mentioned the primary motivation for the bill, namely the spillover of drug-war violence from Mexico (again, which we noted two weeks ago.) Glenn Reynolds, who is a respected law professor at the University of Tennessee and also the blogger known as Instanpundit, argued last week that the Arizona law is probably justified under Article IV, Section 4 of the Constitution, which stipulates that:

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

The federal government, Reynolds argues, is simply not upholding its end of the bargain here. And if the President or anyone else wants Arizona to repeal its law and treat aliens with a little more dignity and charity, then he will first have to address the issues that prompted the law, namely the drug war, its spillover violence, and the possibility (we'd say "eventuality") of massive numbers of Mexican's flooding across the border *rightfully* demanding political asylum. As Reynolds put it:

Arizona is not — yet, anyway — engaging in war, but it's clear from this language that it's constitutionally empowered to do so when invaded, even if the federal government does nothing (and perhaps even in the face of federal objection). Arizona's legislation is passed in response to armed people coming across the border and killing Arizonans, which sounds rather like an invasion.

Like we've said, we're generally pro-immigration. But both as a matter of policy and politics, the idea of taking on comprehensive immigration reform at this point strikes us utterly and completely insane. Doing so will complicate the issues, will ensure that nothing productive is done to address the real and compelling threats, and will serve simply to turn immigration into yet another battlefield in the “conservatives are racists” war being waged by the left and mainstream press.

Conservatives deserve better than that. Arizonans deserve better than that. The people of Mexico, caught between murderous drug warriors on the one hand and self-absorbed race-baiting political hustlers on the other, deserve better than that. The surest way to turn this contentious issue into a human disaster is to demagogue it.

And that sadly is what Barack Obama seems all too excited to do.

This is mistake — on soooooo many levels.

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